

Good afternoon Members of the GAE committee and public,

It is my pleasure to speak to you regarding the proposed legislation Bill # SB 1051
For the record I am opposed to said Bill.

I have been a Registrar of Voters, Election Administrator, in the large City of Norwalk for 15 years and involved with the office for an additional 10 years. Serving as Deputy, Moderator, office staff, poll worker and all around "Do It". I have also served the State of Connecticut as a Certified Moderator trainer teaching municipal moderators for over 11 years.

I have a number of items that I will present in writing and have labeled them for your review.

Wedding compared to Elections Scenario: Almost everyone here has either been to a wedding, set up a wedding, or have PAID for a wedding. Therefore, you can understand what it takes to set up multiple "Weddings/Elections" each year.

1. Office duties: I prepared this list of duties to present to new Registrars at the ROVAC training/greeting session.
2. Connecticut's election calendar: Review of the calendar shows the duties of both the Registrars and the Town Clerk.
3. My testimony

I have experienced many issues in my tenure:

Everything starts in our office: every President, Legislator, Mayor, therefore every law, road, tax etc. starts with us. We are the Gate Keepers of Democracy.

In 1982 a wonderful Registrar, Ann Artell wrote a letter, here is a bit of it as it means the same today; "Our democratic form of government is based upon 'Free' elections. Such Elections can only be 'Free' if they are conducted by registrars who are independent of control, and completely impartial in the conduct of their official duties. Their first responsibility is to the public at large, to protect their statutory rights and privileges. This office stands for 'Freedom' through the voting process and it is up to us to hold its standard high."

Unfortunately there has been very few "I am in charge" and this conflict has always been corrected locally. This makes for a dysfunctional office.

Most municipality Registrars have great working relationships. I have that in Norwalk we both bring separate expertise to the table. I am a paperwork do it yesterday type person. Stuart is the number s and computer guru. We have a great office as do the majority of offices have. Registrars are the working staff in offices not just a figure head.

The Registrars have for over 15 years, that I know of requested Certification and I am glad to see that happen. ROVAC has been in the forefront of training and assisting Registrars.

ROVAC all has setup training for the new Registrars along with the SOTS. It would be helpful to have a more extensive program.

We are resourceful. When a problem arises we find a solution. CVRS unfortunately is down more than expected. On a Primary Day we worked around the problem. We have to make it and we do. Do we make mistakes along the way – yes and we work to correct them and Never let it happen again.

Moderators are the polling site, Chief Official, they must take a course and become certified... Last year Judi Beaudreau and I were the only two “Certified” trainers in the State. We worked with the SOTS to teach others to be trainers. Judi and I taught four more persons to be trainers but only two (one team) has fully completed the SOTS criteria. I agree we need to get training programs on all fronts up and moving.

This past year, I, like many others won the nomination for office in a Primary. The Registrar of Voters office the same as other elected offices are always open to primary. The voters chose who they wanted to represent them in the Registrar’s office. This does happen in many municipalities.

In closing, Please don’t change what truly is not broken. Make adjustments for the better. The integrity of Elections is in your hands.

I appreciate your attention to my testimony both oral and written. I can be reached by phone at 203-854-7764 or by email at klyons@norwalkct.org.

Submitted by
Karen Doyle Lyons
Registrar of Voters, Election Administrator
Norwalk